

AMHERST COUNCIL ON AGING MINUTES

April 2, 2009

Members Present: Daniel Clapp, Doris Holden, Joan Golowich, Joel Gordon, Rosemary Kofler, Kathy Koplow, Barbara Sutherland, Juana Trujillo

Absent: none

Select Board Liaison: Gerry Weiss

Staff Present: Nancy Pagano (Director/Program Director), Maura Plante (Assistant Director/Services), Karen Erman (Administrative Assistant), Giovanna Mix (Administrative Assistant for Programs), Priscilla Robbins (Senior Aide Program), Lisa White (Director of Senior Health Services)

Guests: none

Welcome:

Barbara Sutherland, Chair, called the Council on Aging meeting to order at 9:10 AM.

Minutes of Previous Meeting:

The minutes of the March 5, 2009 meeting were approved and accepted.

Friends of Amherst Senior Center Treasurer's Report:

Doris provided a handout. There is \$9,026.18 in the checking account and \$45,445.04 in the investment account. Doris contacted Edward Jones about the dwindling investment money. They advised 'no changes'. The original amount invested was \$54,450.01 in 1999. The amount received in honor of David Yaukey's service was \$195.

Karen reported that the total received by the Friends thus far for FY09 has been \$10,925.00.

Nancy mentioned other money that has been received: the annual \$10,000 for Senior Health Services from our benefactors: \$500 from the Florence Savings Bank Community Choices fund raiser; money for a coat rack from the Amherst Woman's Club; hundreds of dollars worth of medical equipment was donated for our loan closet.

The Treasurer's report was approved and accepted.

NEW BUSINESS

Volunteer Recognition:

Nancy announced that June 16, 2009 at 2:00 PM is the date of this year's volunteer recognition program. There will be a Barbershop Quartet providing entertainment. Nancy hopes all COA members will attend.

Eveline Sears Senior Activist Awards:

The awards are presented at the Volunteer Recognition event. The award is to recognize those who give freely of their time to help others to remain independent and have quality of life. Nancy asked COA members to consider for approval her recommendations for award recipients. **Shirley Packard** sets up and hosts the twice-monthly health seminars. Shirley used to be on the COA. She was instrumental in starting our first Nursing Center. **Jane Sanctuary** has been the coordinator of putting the Senior Spirit newsletters together for many years. She is a quiet, unassuming person who clears her schedule for 2 full days in order to help get out the newsletter. Juana stated that Jane also gives freely of her time and energy at the Ann Whalen House.

Dan made a motion that the COA approves Shirley Packard and Jane Sanctuary to be 2009 recipients of the Eveline Sears Award. The motion was unanimously approved.

Report from COA Members Who Attended the Recent Training by the Executive Office of Elder Affairs:

Rosemary, Barbara and Joan attended. Rosemary reported. Emmett Schmarsow conducted an engaging, interactive and useful seminar. He emphasized the responsibilities of the COA: **Advisory** – to provide policy input. **Support** the Director and staff of the Senior Center in implementing and promoting the mission of the COA of identifying needs and finding resources to help elders remain independent. Emmett stressed the importance of **listening** to identify unmet needs, **advocacy** to promote awareness and intergenerational participation, and **outreach** to identify those in need.

SUB-COMMITTEE UPDATE

Ad Hoc Survey Committee:

Joel reported. Dr. Randall Stokes and Dr. Doug Anderton of The Social and Demographic Research Institute (SADRI) at UMass met with the committee on March 30. They submitted a second proposal for conducting the 2010 survey. They proposed sending out 1100 questionnaires as suggested by the committee. (The first proposal was for a mailing of 350 questionnaires). The Chicopee Survey group sent out 2 different questionnaires, one to elders and one to baby boomers. There was considerable overlap in the questions. Drs. Stokes and Anderton suggested one single questionnaire with a small subset of questions for the boomers and elders. They asked us to carefully consider the nature of the survey, what we expect, our motives, purpose, and how we would use the information. They cautioned us to look carefully at the Chicopee questionnaire and individual questions for length, appropriateness, phrasing, directness, etc. and submit our recommendations to them.

Drs. Stokes and Anderton would work pro bono. The estimated cost is \$8820.00. (The UConn proposal was for \$26,000). They would begin the survey in June 2009 and have the analysis completed by the middle of October 2009. They have not committed to taking on this project yet. They will let us know within a few days. If they agree to it, the COA can expect a recommendation from the Ad Hoc committee to move forward, using SADRI to conduct our 2010 survey.

Nancy has sent inquiries to the Housing Authority, the VNA, the Town Manager, and the Planning Department to ask if they have any issues they would like to have addressed in the questionnaire. Since this is a project of the COA, Nancy would have each member look over the rough draft for further input. The COA will also be asked to determine how much to ask from the Friends to cover the costs of the survey.

Joan cautioned asking questions directed towards answers we want rather than leaving things open ended so we get information we are not expecting and don't yet know. Joel said that is the reason for using an outside, professional, unbiased group.

Highland Valley Elder Services:

Joan reported that the Expo would take place Monday, April 6, 2009 at 1:30 PM.

Nominating Committee Report:

Rosemary reported. Barbara's term expires in June 2009. She has agreed to another 3-year appointment as Vice Chair. Dan's term expires June 2009. He agreed to another 3-year appointment as Chair. These positions were approved by the Town Manager. Joel's partial term expires in 2010. He is eligible for 2 succeeding 3-year appointments. We have not yet found a candidate who will agree to fill David Yaukey's vacated position. We would like to have a broad representation of community and value the experience of current members in areas of medical, financial, housing, and legal matters. It would be good to have a new member with strong skills in public speaking, leadership or fundraising.

CONTINUING BUSINESS

Budget meetings with Town Staff:

Gerry Weiss said the budget situation is grim. He does not understand why the State legislature will not pass the local meals tax option. The governor supports it. The Mass Municipal Assoc. has been pushing hard for it for years. It could bring in \$8-900,000 for Amherst. The Town is looking at an over \$2 million deficit. Gerry is pushing hard for unions to reconsider contracts and reduce cost of living increases. The average rate of wage increase this year is 5.5%. Gerry has asked for a full wage study in Town. The SB supports that. The School Committee does not. The teacher's union will not come to the table. Current 3-year contracts were signed without the money being available for wage increases. Only non-union and police agreed to come to the table. Non-union members are willing to forgo their cost of living increases. If all parties agreed to a zero cost of living increase it could save the Town over \$1 million. There is lack of transparency in the School Department over budget issues.

Nancy reminded us that the Senior Center proposed FY10 budget at this stage simply includes 3 full time positions, \$1000 for office supplies and \$360 for MA COA membership. Fortunately, the Friends have raised enough money to cover our other costs.

Stay Put Project:

Nancy reported there is no further progress with Stay Put. We are still waiting to have a response from Town Counsel regarding our questions having to do primarily with liability.

STAFF REPORTS**Amherst College Emergency Funds:**

Maura has given out no additional funds since our March meeting. She anticipates needing to use money in the near future to help an individual in Town who has a hoarding problem and whose apartment was deemed unlivable by the Public Health Department.

Senior Health Services:

Lisa reported that the total client visits for March was 82 -- 28 at the Senior Center, 50 at the Clark House and 4 home visits. The grand total since October of 2007 is 834 visits. That breaks down as 158 individuals with 676 repeat visits. The highlight of the March report is the increase in visits through the Clark House Wellness Clinic. With the assistance of Kathy Koplow and 4 senior student nurses they are seeing people who do not come to the Senior Center. Lisa said that the community room at the Clark House is welcoming and inviting, healthful snacks are available and it encourages people to engage with one another. On April 30 at 10:30 AM the Clark House will have a 'Heart Healthy' luncheon with a talk on heart health and it's relationship to diet.

Lisa would like to continue the clinic at the Clark House at a reduced number of hours in the summer months (when students leave) and split her time as clinician between the Clark House and the Ann Whalen House.

Kathy commented that the Wellness Clinic is serving many new people. It connects people with each other and has been a way of encouraging elders to use the Senior Center services.

The Senior Health Advisor Group (SHAG) met this morning. Nancy said that one of the members, Ellie Vanetzian, PhD Nurse, approached her about the possibility of adopting a "stress testing program" at the Amherst Senior Center - a program that Ellie conducts in Chicopee.

Dan, our physician and a SHAG member, said it is a program that uses specialized equipment for stress testing for the purpose of helping seniors increase their exercise tolerance with greater safety. Although it is a good program in theory, Dan does not advise it for our facility. He believes it is very risky for a nurse to be administering stress testing at a 20-minute distance from the nearest hospital and without a cardiologist on hand. In addition, the equipment is costly and our senior center does not currently have the space.

Nancy announced that Loretta Cavanaugh would get the Golden Cane next, as the oldest person in Town. She is 101 and has lived in Amherst for 80 years. She now lives at the Center for Extended Care. Nancy and Larry Shaffer will present the Cane on April 21 at 11:00 AM.

Nancy sent a letter to clinicians (who use the Bangs and get a fee for their services) asking them for a contribution to the Friends during these hard times. Only the Massage Therapist has responded.

Rosemary announced that the date and time of the Town 250th Anniversary Parade is firm. It will take place on September 27, 2009 at 1:00 PM. It will begin near Kirby Theater on Amherst College campus and end at the Mullins Center. The COA has signed up to march. We can also have a van for those who cannot walk but we can't swap midway along the route. Rules will be posted on the Town website.

The COA meeting adjourned at 10:40 AM.

The next meeting of the COA will be held on May 14, 2009 at 9:00 AM.

The approved minutes of the March 5, 2009 meeting were delivered to the Select Board to be filed.